



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH HISTORIC WINTERSBURG PRESERVATION TASK FORCE

MINUTES - August 23, 2013

Attendance:

Council Members: Mayor Connie Boardman (absent), Council Member Matthew Harper (absent), and Council Member Joe Shaw (absent)

Chair Mary Urashima, Committee Members Gloria Alvarez, Stacha Khatib, Barbara Haynes, Dave Wentworth Sr., Sue Gordon

Advisory Members: Elaine Parker, Kanji Sahara

Guests: Ron Shenkman, Rainbow Environmental; Dick Harlow, Richard Harlow and Associates for Rainbow Environmental

Staff: Ricky Ramos

Public Comments

No public comments.

Approval of minutes

Minutes for July 26, 2013 approved unanimously, motion by Haynes, second by Alvarez.

Status update on CEQA process

The Task Force discussed the actions taken at the Huntington Beach Planning Commission to recommend certification of the EIR and approval of GPA/ZMA, and denial of the SOC (which would have allowed demolition). The task force also discussed the appeals of these actions, the appeal of the EIR action by the Ocean View School District, and the appeal of the SOC by Council Member Matt Harper.

Historic Context Survey schedule for council review

The City has been working with Galvin Preservation Associates on the contract regarding corrections to the draft document. They have determined not to proceed with mid-century modern resources survey. The Historic Resources Board has provided their recommendations.

Staff liaison Ricky Ramos stepped out to assist at the Planning Department counter.

National Park Service – 5-24-13 Site Visit report and recommendations

Chair Mary Urashima discussed the property inspection by the U.S. National Park Service and their findings that the property is “potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in association with Japanese American settlement of the American West.”

The assessment also is that the property “retains a remarkable amount of integrity,” and that “none of the buildings are beyond repair.” The NPS also recommended “some

general maintenance and stabilization of the buildings. Immediate actions that could easily be accomplished include removal of debris from roofs, cleaning trash and other debris from building interiors, securing doors and windows to keep out elements, etc. Other short-term actions that could be achieved include moth balling the buildings according to preservation standards.”

Chair Urashima explained listing on the National Register opens doors to grants and funding for a variety of preservation alternatives, does not remove the applicant’s rights, and can facilitate technical assistance to all parties from the State Office of Historic Preservation and the NPS.

Sue Gordon, representative for Rainbow Environmental stated they have cooperated fully, been available for tours, don’t dispute the history and the buildings are secured. In terms of stabilizing the buildings, Gordon said Rainbow will not follow the NPS recommendations and that the buildings will “stay the way they are” and that it was better for Rainbow “to leave them the way they are.” Gordon also advised that Rainbow has no intention of applying for the National Register and that they “would love funding to move the buildings.”

Kanji Sahara, advisory member, explained the significance of the Alien Land Law of 1913 and emphasized his support to preserve the history *in situ*.

Ron Shankman, guest (chairman emeritus of Rainbow Environmental), stated “let’s get real” that he “would love to see this thing work out for everyone.” Shankman explained his own family’s history with Auschwitz and said that he understands the history. Shankman stated the issue is “all about money...we can work it out if we have money.” Shankman also stated “I’m not going to listen to the National Park Service” and that the task force has to “accelerate efforts to find pots of money.”

Dick Harlow, guest (consultant to Rainbow Environmental), introduced himself and that he had been in Huntington Beach since 1960 and left the City planning department in 1979. Harlow stated he agrees with Mr. Shankman, disagrees with the NPS technical assessment, and thinks the buildings are falling apart.

Advisory member Elaine Parker stated she is very supportive of Rainbow, but would like to see historic preservation accomplished. Parker discussed a recent trip she made where she viewed Manzanar and Minidoka relocation centers, and that she was very moved by the history. She said the preservation of this history is particularly important to understand what people went through.

Task force member Gloria Alvarez stated the reason large donations are not being made at this time is because there is no decision about whether or not preservation will be pursued and if so, what type of preservation (e.g. onsite or relocation). Alvarez stated, “Why can’t they pledge? They need to know what they’re donating to.”

Chair Urashima repeated the statement about grants and donations being hindered by the lack of a decision about preservation. She also reminded everyone of important milestones, such as the visit by the Consul General of Japan, the greater national awareness of Historic Wintersburg, the invitation to speak about Historic Wintersburg at the National Historic Trust conference in Indianapolis in October, and the site inspection by the National Park Service in May, all within less than a year of the task force being

established. She explained these efforts are the logical approach to gaining public awareness for financial support as well as historic designation which leads to funding.

Shenkman stated that Rainbow had no issues with the task force efforts, but that they were very unhappy about the actions taken by the Ocean View School District. Gordon added they were unhappy about the “horrible letters” sent by the School District and thought they misrepresented Rainbow’s actions.

Budget

The Preservation Fund currently is slightly less than \$5,000, with some contributions pending, with an additional \$750.00 in an educational outreach account.

Fundraising

The task force discussed upcoming fundraising efforts being organized by task force members and the lead time necessary to finalize and adequately promote events.

Public Outreach update

The Task Force discussed the outreach efforts and Facebook page growth, with a weekly reach of over 800. Chair Urashima reported over 50,000 had been reading the blog.